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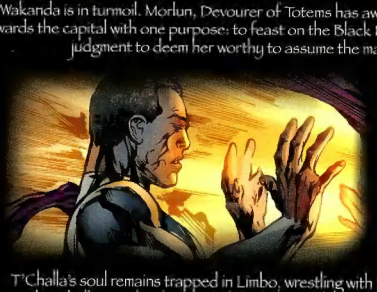
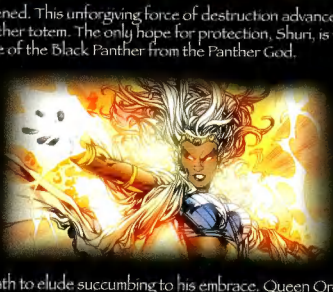
BLACK PANTHER

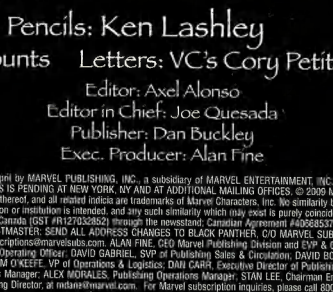
THE DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES
PART 5

Since the dawn of time, the proud African warrior nation of Wakanda has evolved as a high-tech, resource-rich, ecologically sound paradise unmatched anywhere else in the world. Their ruler is the Black Panther—Wakanda's religious, political, and military leader and the embodiment of the ideals of the nation. There has always been one... until now.





Wakanda is in turmoil. Morlun, Devourer of Totems has awakened. This unforgiving force of destruction advances towards the capital with one purpose: to feast on the Black Panther totem. The only hope for protection, Shuri, is facing judgment to deem her worthy to assume the mantle of the Black Panther from the Panther God.



T'Challa's soul remains trapped in Limbo, wrestling with Death to elude succumbing to his embrace. Queen Ororo and T'Challa's mother have sought out the witch doctor Zawavari in a desperate effort to save him. Zawavari has rendered the queen corporeally confined in a similar coma as T'Challa's, sending her into Limbo to help her husband find a way home....

Meanwhile the Panther God's verdict is not a kind one. He declares that Shuri is unworthy of the mantle, and she always will be...

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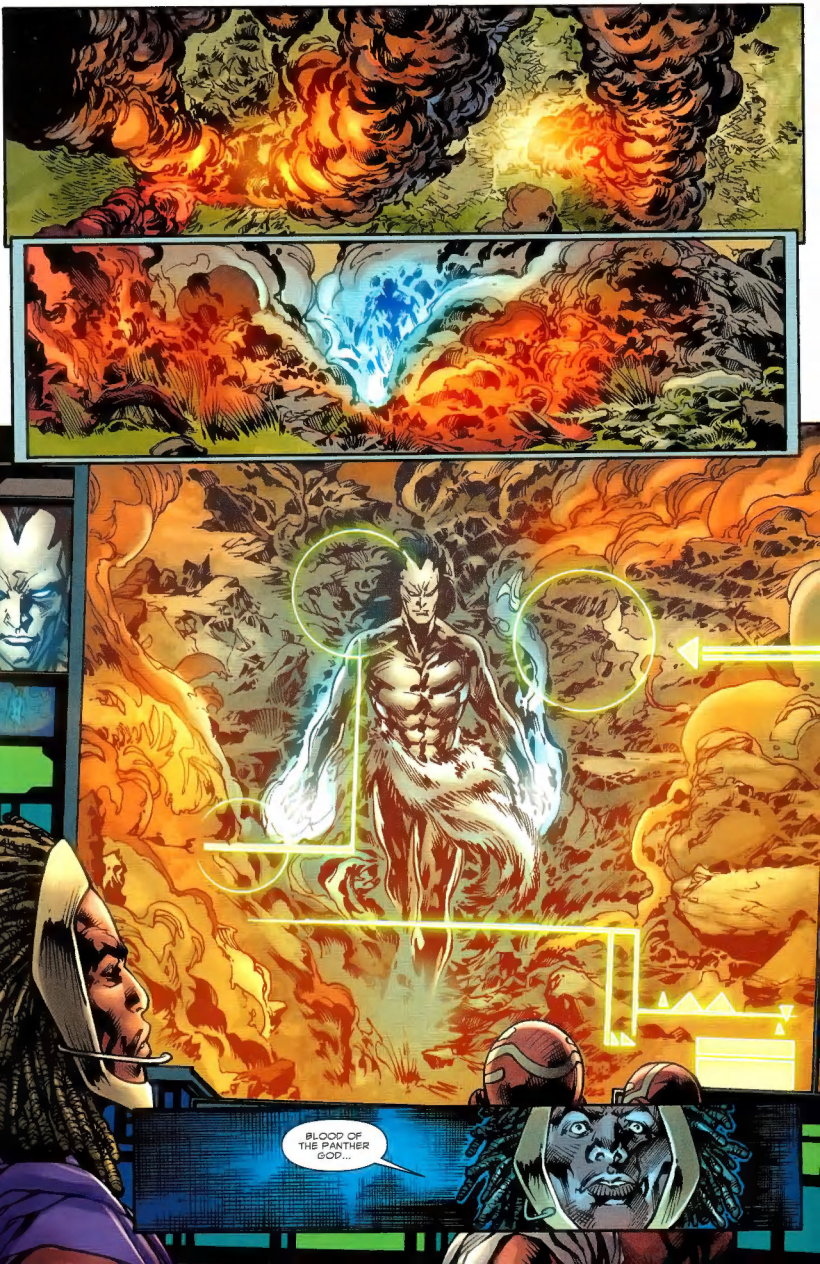
WAKANDA.
LAUNCH.

UHKOM
TACTICAL! CONFIRM THE KILL.
SIR, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, NO LIVING BEING COULD...
I KNOW...


BLOOD OF THE PANTHER GOD...

WELL, ISN'T THIS STIRRING? THE WIFE TRAVELED ALL THE WAY TO LIMBO TO PREVENT HER POOR HUSBAND FROM TAKING THE FINAL WALK.
RELEASE T'CHALLA.
NOW.
THREATS? TO ME? THAT'S RICH.
SINCE YOUR SPECIES CRAWLED OUT OF THE MUCK I'VE FACED WARRIORS AND CHAMPIONS WHO THOUGHT THEY HAD THE POWER TO TAKE WHAT IS MINE.
I FEAST ON THEIR SCREAMS.
YOU'VE FACED CHAMPIONS...
...BUT HAVE YOU EVER FACED A GODDESS?

KWOOOSH
DON'T HOLD BACK, MY LOVE.
TEAR THIS WORLD APART!
HELLO, HUSBAND.

UH!
PRINCESS! YOU'RE BACK!
QUICK. THERE'S NOT TIME TO WASTE.
WE NEED TO GET YOU FITTED FOR YOUR VESTMENTS RIGHT AWAY. WE'RE FACING A VERY DANGEROUS FOE, AND THE TROOPS ARE GOING TO NEED YOU--
I FAILED.
I FAILED MY BROTHER... I FAILED MY COUNTRY.
THE PANTHER GOD TURNED HIS BACK ON ME.
I'M... NOTHING.

AND YET YOU LIVE, CHILD.
THOSE WHO THE PANTHER GOD REJECTS...
I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M ALIVE.
MAYBE IT'S MY PUNISHMENT.
TO LIVE WITH THE SHAME OF FAILING EVERYONE I LOVE...
WE FACE AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION, ZURI. IMPOSSIBLE.
WE NEED THE PANTHER.
ALL OF OUR OTHER WEAPONS HAVE FAILED.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHAT'S HAPPENED?

IS HE DEAD? CAN IT BE?
NO. NOT DEAD. BUT DEFEATED.
FOR NOW.
MY WIFE!
I THOUGHT I LOST YOU FOREVER!
NOW HURRY, WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME--

PERHAPS THE POETS ARE RIGHT AFTER ALL.
LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH.
LIFE ISN'T A POEM, MY LOVE.
AND THIS ISN'T A STORYBOOK...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WE'VE WON.
WON. YES.
AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO HOME, MY LOVE.
YOU MEAN TIME FOR US TO GO HOME.
T'CHA... THERE IS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.

"MORLUN--DEVOURER OF TOTEMS--HAS COME TO FEAST ON T'CHALLA, LIKE A LION ON A WOUNDED CARIBOU. AND THUS FAR, HE'S PROVED UNSTOPPABLE.
"WE HAVE THROWN MISSILES AT HIM. MORTARS AND BOMBS. LASER CANNONS. VIBRANIUM-CORE NUCLEAR-TIPPED SHELLS. AIR AND GROUND ASSAULTS.
"WE HAVEN'T EVEN SLOWED HIS APPROACH."
AT THIS RATE HE WILL BREACH THE WALLS WITHIN THE HOUR. ALL REMAINING GROUND FORCES ARE READY TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH.
AND WE HAVE NO BLACK PANTHER. WE ARE OUT OF OPTIONS.
WE ARE WAKANDANS. WE DO NOT RUN OUT OF OPTIONS.
MOTHER? WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH STORM? HAS SHE--
NOT NOW, SHURI.
W'KABI, HAVE YOU MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO MOVE MY SON OUT OF HARM'S WAY?
MORLUN WILL BE HERE SOON. WE NEED TO--
MOTHER, CALM YOURSELF, PLEASE. THERE'S NO TIME TO--
SHURI... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...
"...STORM ISN'T COMING BACK."
NO...THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE.
HOW COULD YOU AGREE TO SUCH A THING?
THAT WAS THE PRICE, MY LOVE.
A LIFE FOR A LIFE.
MY LIFE FOR ONE THAT MATTERS MORE TO EVERY LIVING SOUL IN WAKANDA.
WHO KNEW OF THE TERMS?
NO ONE BUT MYSELF AND THE WITCH DOCTOR, ZAWAVARI.
ZAWAVARI...
I DO NOT ACCEPT THIS.
THERE MUST BE A WAY!
AH, THERE'S NOTHING SO DELICIOUS AS HOPE.

YOUR QUEEN AGREED TO THE TERMS. THE CONTRACT IS SACRED. ETERNAL.
ONE SOUL COMES IN, ONE SOUL GOES OUT.
OF COURSE, IF THE TWO OF YOU WERE TO DECIDE TO TAKE A LITTLE WALK WITH ME, I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO--
BE SILENT!
KaUgH
YOU CAN'T WIN, T'CHALLA! YOU CAN'T DEFEAT DEATH.

ARE YOU INSANE, RAMONDA?!
SHURI HAS FAILED TO APPEASE THE PANTHER GOD. T'CHALLA IS BROKEN AND BEYOND HELP, AND YOU SQUANDER THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON LEFT IN OUR ARSENAL?
IT WAS HER CHOICE TO MAKE.
I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.
BY SQUANDERING ORORO, YOU MAY HAVE KILLED US ALL!
YOU, ZAWAVARI-- WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
DO YOU FIND SOME AMUSMENT IN THE DEATH OF OUR WHOLE CULTURE?
WELL, PRINCESS, SINCE YOU ASK:
WAKANDA IS IN FLAMES BECAUSE YOU--ALL OF YOU--ARE STUPID AND BLIND.
YOU ARE KILLING YOURSELVES.
PEOPLE I LOVE ARE DYING, OLD MAN. WAKANDA STANDS ON THE BRINK.
IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE TO SAY, THEN GET TO IT.

SHURI, PLEASE. WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NONSENSE.
AND YET YOU WASTE THE TIME YOU HAVE.
HOW DARE--
UNCLE-- HUSH!
I KNOW ZAWAVARI. HE STANDS FOR EVERYTHING MY BROTHER HATED. THE OLD WAYS. SUPERSTITION. RITUAL. MAGIC.
T'CHALLA HAD NO FAITH IN ANY OF THAT.
OLD MAN...IF YOU HAVE A MAGIC CARD UP YOUR SLEEVE, NOW'S THE TIME TO PLAY IT.
MAGIC IS NOT ABOUT TRICKS, LITTLE ONE.
MAGIC IS ABOUT POWER.
AND WAS REJECTED BY IT.
DON'T YOU FIND THAT... INTERESTING?
THE PANTHER GOD FOUND YOU LACKING...YET YOU RETURNED ALIVE.
HAVEN'T YOU WONDERED-- EVEN FOR A MOMENT-- IF THE LIFE GIVEN BACK TO YOU HAS SOME MEANING?
SOME PURPOSE?
SHURI--YOU, OF ALL OF US, KNOW THAT. YOU JUST STARED IT IN THE FACE.
YES.

THE ANSWERS CANNOT BE FOUND IN THIS WORLD.
NOR ARE THEY ENTIRELY IN THE MAGICAL REALM.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NONSENSE!
ZAWAVARI... THIS ISN'T HELPING.
YES, MOTHER...
IT IS.
I THINK I UNDERSTAND NOW...
JUST AS ALL OF US TRUST TOO MUCH IN BOMBS AND BULLETS AND THE ADVANCED TOYS OF WAR THAT ONLY WAKANDA CAN CREATE.
HOW LIKE A DAUGHTER OF MODERN WAKANDA I'VE BECOME.
THE PANTHER GOD SPARED ME EVEN AFTER I FAILED.
MY PRIDE WAS MY DEFEAT. I TRUSTED TOO MUCH IN THE SCIENTIFIC TRAINING I'D BEEN GIVEN. I TRUSTED TOO MUCH IN FIGHTING SKILLS AND TACTICS, IN MY RIGHT TO BECOME WAKANDA'S WEAPON IN HER HOUR OF NEED.
ZAWAVARI IS RIGHT.
AND I KNOW WHAT I--WHAT WE--HAVE TO DO...
ZURI, WAKABI--I NEED YOU TO STAND GUARD OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER DOOR WHILE I MAKE PREPARATIONS.
WE'RE GOING TO KILL MORLUN.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE FOLLOWING A PLAN COOKED UP BY A LITTLE GIRL AND A MADMAN.
DO YOU HAVE A BETTER ONE?
NO.
THEN STOP COMPLAINING AND BRACE YOURSELF FOR THE RED TIDE OF BLOOD AND BATTLE THAT'S COMING OUR WAY.
"RED TIDE OF BLOOD"? THAT'S AWFULLY POETIC FOR A CITY-BOY.
FIGURED.
HEH. I THINK I STOLE THAT FROM SOMEWHERE.
BOOM!
YOU READY, CITYBOY?
I'M READY, COUNTRYBOY.

IT'S AN HONOR, BROTHER.
THE HONOR IS ALL MINE, BROTHER.

FOR WAKANDA!
WHOOMP

I THOUGHT THIS WAS A WARRIOR NATION.
KRUNCH
SUCH A DISAPPOINTMENT...
NOW FOR THE MAIN COURSE.

I CAN ALREADY TASTE HIS HEART, HIS BLOOD, HIS SOUL...
SHUNK
MONSTER.
YOU'VE FACED THE MUSCLE OF WAKANDA...

...NOW FACE ITS CLAWS.
TO BE CONCLUDED...